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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/NCE; PLEASE PASS TO NSC FOR ADAM STERLING

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SUBJECT: "A STUPID ANSWER" ... AND A SMART STATEMENT:
FIDESZ ON THE MAGYAR GARD

REF: BUDAPEST 1468 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: P/E COUNSELOR ERIC V. GAUDIOSI; REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (SBU) Addressing the diplomatic corps on September 6, FIDESZ leaders including party president Orban affirmed their commitment to "democratic and non-violent" opposition, specifically denouncing the Magyar Garda as "a stupid answer" and the radical right as a "danger to society." He declared that FIDESZ has no common ground with groups sponsoring anti-semitism, dictatorship, or fascism.

¶2. (SBU) Affirming that "FIDESZ takes this issue seriously," Orban described the "politics of hatred" as a symptom of Hungary's "political, social, and moral crisis." While demonstrations are to be expected in a "year of restrictions) not reform," he continued, opposition must remain within the limits of the law. FIDESZ's "duty is to remain calm, balanced, and committed to our values (and to answers that support law and order." FIDESZ spokespersons have echoed these themes in the context of the European Peoples Party (EPP).

¶3. (SBU) Responding to a question from the audience, Orban commented that the public "wants an opposition capable of removing this government," noting that "a weak government and a weak opposition will be seen as increasingly irrelevant by the people." Although he insisted that "the government must govern," he emphasized his party's commitment to engage on the substance of the issues, pressing for initiatives to combat corruption, reduce the public sector bureaucracy, and stimulate economic growth.

¶4. (SBU) In a public appearance near Lake Balaton over the weekend, Orban reiterated his opposition to the Magyar Garda, specifically noting that their active support for the spring referendum would undermine its legitimacy. Hungary, he concluded, should not "tread down this path."

¶5. (C) Comment: Slow off the starting blocks, FIDESZ is nonetheless on the record now denouncing the politics of hatred in general and distancing itself from the Magyar Garda in particular. The positive trend line in their recent statements represents a clear recognition of international concerns regarding the Garda and a concerted effort to respond accordingly. End Comment.

FOLEY